

Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

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PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01

SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 SAJ-01 NRC-05 OES-06 ERDA-05 EB-07

ACDA-07 FEA-01 /120 W

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R 160830Z APR 76

FM AMEMBASSY NIAMEY

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3459

AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY BAMAKO

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY COTONOU

AMEMBASSY LAGOS

AMEMBASSY LOME

AMEMBASSY NDJAMENA

AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT

AMEMBASSY OUAGADOUGOU

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY RABAT

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

AMEMBASSY TUNIS

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 NIAMEY 1653

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, NG, AL,LY

SUBJECT: KOUNTCHI SUMMIT MEETING WITH BOUMEDIENE AND QUDHAFI

REF: NIAMEY 1548; NIAMEY 1587 (NOTAL)

1. LAST WEEK (APRIL 8) PRESIDENT KOUNTCHE OF NIGER MET
WITH BOUMEDIENE AND QADAHAFI FOR SEVERAL HOURS SUMMIT MEETING
IN ALGERIAN TOWN OFOUARGLA, VARIOUS DESCRIBED AS SMALL
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VILLAGE AND QUEEN CITY OF INDUSTRIAL SAHARA. MEETING WHICH

CAME ABOUT AT KOUNTCHE'S INITIATIVE WAS, AS SEEN FROM NIAMEY, RATHER UNUSUAL GATHERING. THIS MESSAGE, BASED ON DISCUSSION WITH PRESIDENT KOUNTCHE APRIL 7 BEFORE OUARGLA SESSION AND WITH VARIOUS LOCAL OBSERVERS SINCE THEN, SEEKS TO PIECE TOGETHER WHAT IT WAS ABOUT.

2. KOUNTCHE TOLD ME HE HAD TWO THOUGHTS IN MIND IN CALLING MEETING. HE HAD TO DEAL HEAD-ON WITH LIBYAN AND ALGERIAN MEDDLING IN NIGER'S INTERNAL AFFAIRS AND SECONDLY, THERE WERE BORADER STRATEGIC AND POLITICAL ISSUWMSBEARING ON NIGER'S SECURITY AGAINST BACKGROUND OF DEEPENING POLITICAL CRISES IN AFRICA WHICH CALLED FOR HEART-TO-HEART TALK WITH TWO OF NIGER'S IMPORTANT NEIGHBORS.

3. ON FIRST POINT, KOUNTCHE SAID HIS INVESTIGATION INTO ABORTIVE MARCH 15 COUP HAD PRODUCED SOLID EVIDENCE OF LIBYAN BACK-ING OF RINGLEADERS AND INVOLVEMENT. TO HIS SURPRISE, INVESTIGATION HAD ALSO REVEALED ALGERIAN COMPLICITY. HE IS NOT CERTAIN THAT ALGERIAN PLAYED PART IN COUP BUT HE IS SATISFIED THEY HAD ADVANCE KNOWELEGE OF GOINGS-ON AND GIVEN WHAT HE THOUGHT TO BE CLOSE OFFICIAL AND PERSONAL RELATIONS WITH BOUMEDIENE, ALGERIAN FAILURE TO WARN KOUNTCHE COULD ONLY BE INTERPRETED AS AT LEAST TACIT COLLABORATION WITH LIBYA. HE THERFORE HAD NO ALTERNATIVE BUT TO CONFRONT BOTH BOUMEDIENE AND QADHAFI AND ATTEMPT WORK OUT MODUS VIVENDI WHICH WOULD PROTECT NIGER'S INTERESTS.

4. ON SECOND POINT, DURING OUR APRIL 7 MEETING, KOUNTCHE THEORIZED AT SOME LENGTH ON WHAT HE CALLS YEAR OF CRISIS FOR AFRICA. THERE ARE ISSUES LIKE ANGOLA AND WESTERN SAHARA WHICH ARE TEARING AFRICA APART AND WHICH AFRICANS HDE UYOWN THEMSELVES INCAPABLE OF RESOLVING. THERE IS QUESTION OF OUTSIDE INVOLVEMENT IN CONTINENT BACAUSE OF GREAT POWER AMBITIONS OGUWECAUSE SOME SO-CALLED PROGRESSIVE AFRICAN STATES CREATE SITUATIONS WHICH SOVIET UNION CAN EXPLOIT. THERE IS FACT OF WESTERN AND U.S. DISENGAGEMEGZ AND AGRESSIVE SOVIET ACTIVITY WITH CHINESE AT THIS POINT SITTING ON SIDELINES. ALL THIS MEANT AXRICAN COUNTRIES LIKE NIGER, POOR AS THEY WERE, WOULD HAVE TO DIVERT RESOURCES TO REARMING. EVEN SENGHOR WAS TAKING THIS LINE.
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5. AGAINST THIS BACKGROUND, NIGER'S FOREIGN POLICY, ACCORDING TO KOUNTCHE, MUST TAKE INTO ACCOUNT (A) ITS STRATEGIC LOCATION WHICH ALONG WITH CHAD PUTS IT ASTRIDE CENTRAL LAND-MASS OF AFRICA AS POTENTIAL BARRIER TO SOVIET AMBITIONS IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA AND (B) POLICIES PURSUED BY NIGER'S NEIGHBORS TO WHICH NIGER MUST BE SENSITIVE BECAUSE OF ITS LAND-LOCKED STATUS. FOR EXAMPLE, ACTIVIST FOREIGN POLICY

WHICH MUHAMMED HAD BEEN PURSUING IN NIGERIA HAD POSED PROBLEMS FOR NIGER. HE SAID HE HAD FRANKLY TOLD MUHAMMED AT OAU SUMMIT THAT HE WAS MOVING TOO FAST IN ANGOLAN AFFAIRS AND THAT WHILE HE REJECTED IDEA THAT NIGERIA WOULD BECOME SOVIET SATELLITE, MUHAMMED'S POLICIES WERE AIDING AND ABETTING SOVIET OBJECTIVES.

6. ANOTHER NEIGHBOR WAS BENIN WHICH WAS WALLOWING AROUND IN MARXISM AND WAS BECOMING AREA OF INSTABILITY WHICH COMMUNISTS COULD EXPLOIT. AS KOUNTCHE DESCRIBED IT, NIGERIA AND BENIN FORMED AN UNSTABLE AREA OR BOTTLE OF WHICH NIGER WAS THE CORK.

7. ALGERIA AND LIBYA, OTHER NEIGHBORS, SEEMED TO BE INTERESTED IN UNCORKING BOTTLE FOR POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC REASONS. LIBYA SEEMED TO WANT COMPLAISANT NEIGHBOR WHILE ALGERIA SAW NIGER AS CORRIDOR THROUGH WHICH TO EXPAND ITS INFLUENCE SOUTHWARD AND TO REACH VAST NIGERIAN MARKET FOR ITS GROWING INDUSTRIAL CAPACITY. ONE TRANS-SAHARAN ROAD WAS COMPLETED. NIGER, THUS, FOUND ITSELF SURROUNDED BY INSTABILITY, AND BY COUNTRIES WITH EXPANSIONIST AMBITIONS OR RADICAL POLICIES WHICH SEEMED TO OBJECT TO NIGER'S MORE MODERATE AND PRAGMATIC POSITION ON DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN ISSUES.

8. MESSAGE KOUNTCHE FELT HE MUST TRY TO CONVEY TO BOUMEDIENE AND QADHAFI WAS THAT IN THIS YEAR OF CRISIS AFRICAN CHIEFS OF STATE SHOULD TRY TO LIVE AND LET LIVE, RESOLVE PROBLEMS INSTEAD OF CREATE THEM AND AVOID SITUATIONS WHICH MIGHT ATTRACT NON-AFRICAN INTERVENTION."

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SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 SAJ-01 NRC-05 OES-06 ERDA-05 EB-07

ACDA-07 FEAE-00 /121 W

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R 160830Z APR 76

FM AMEMBASSY NIAMEY
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3460
INFO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 NIAMEY 1653

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (MRN TO READ 1653 VICE 1652)

9. IN THIS CONNECTION KOUNTCHE TOLD ME HE COULD ONLY SPECULATE AS TO MOTIVES OF BOUMEDIENE AND QADHAFI IN MESSING AROUND IN NIGER. PERHAPS THERE WAS CONNECTION BETWEEN NIGER'S REFUSAL TO RECOGNIZE POLISARIO WITH BOTH COUNTRIES' SUPPORT OF COUP AGAINST HIM. PERHAPS DIFFERENCES BETWEEN NIGER AND LIBYA OVER GON URANIUM POLICY HAD INFLUENCED QADHAFI. KOUNTCHE SAID ONE OF SECRET CLAUSES IN AGREEMENT DIORI HAD SIGNED
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WITH LIBYA SHORTLY BEFORE HIS OVERTHROW IN 1975 WAS PROVISION INVOLVING LIBYA-NIGER JOINT VENTURE IN URANIUM DEVELOPMENT "SO THAT QADHAFI COULD HAVE HIS BOMB" ACCOMPANIED BY UNDERSTANDING THAT GON WOULD FORCE FRENCH OUT OF URANIUM BUSINESS. AFTER KOUNTCHE CAME TO POWER, QADHAFI HAD PRESSED HIM SEVERAL TIMES ON JOINT VENTURE AND EXPULSION OF FRENCH. KOUNTCHE SAID HE HAD TEMPORIZED BECAUSE HE MISTRUSTS QADHAFI AND BECAUSE HE DID NOT WANT FRENCH TECHNICIANS WORKING IN NIGER WHO KNEW THEIR URANIUM BUSINESS REPLACED BY COLLECTION OF EXPATIRATES OF UNKNOWN COMPETENCE QADHAFI WOULD HIRE AND WHOSE LOYALTIES AND QUALIFICATIONS WOULD BE SUSPECT.

10. IN ANY EVENT, WITH EVIDENCE OF ALGERIAN AND LIBYAN COMPLICITY AND WITH NIGER'S SECURITY AT STAKE, KOUNTCHE SAID HE SAW NO POINT IN BEATING AROUND THE BUSH. ACCORDINGLY, HE SENT NIGE AMBASSADOR TO LIBYA EL HADJI OUMAR TO TRIPOLI AND ALGIERS TO NEGOTIATE SUMMIT MEETING. GIVEN IMPORTANCE OF MATTER TO NIGER, HE ACCEPTED DATE OF APRIL 8 EVEN THOUGH THIS MEANT MISSING CEO SUMMIT IN DAKAR AND HE WOULD

BE ONLY CHIEF OF STATE ABSENT.

11. IN GOING TO MEETING KOUNTCHE SAID HE WAS NOT OPERATING ENTIRELY FROM POSITION OF WEAKNESS BECAUSE BOUMEDIENE AND QADHAFI WERE UP TO THEIR EARS IN DOMESTIC PROBLEMS AND FACED INTERNAL OPPOSITION. FURTHER, TWO LEADERS DID NOT TRUST EACH OTHER AND WHILE THEY WERE ACTING IN CONCERT AT PRESENT, THERE WAS NO CERTAINTY HOW LONG THIS COLLABORATION WOULD LAST. HE ADDED HE DID NOT GET ALONG WITH QADHAFI BUT ENJOYED GOOD RAPPORT WITH BOUMEDIENE AND HE HOPED THIS PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP, IN SPITE OF ALGERIA'S HAND IN COUP, WOULD HELP HIM IN DEALING WITH QADHAFI AND IN DAYS AHEAD.

12. ON HIS RETURN FROM OUARGLA, KOUNTCHE GAVE VISITING BELGIAN AMBASSADOR APRIL 10 AND OTHER SUBSEQUENTLY FOLLOWING ACCOUNT OF SUMMIT. HE SAID HE HAD BLUNTLY ACCUSED QADHAFI AND BOUMEDIENE OF COMPLICITY IN COUP. QADHAFI HAD DENIED EVERY THING WHILE BOUMEDIENE HAD EXPRESSED SURPRISE AND CONCERN OVER KOUNTCHE'S ALLEGATIONS. LATTER INSISTED HE HAD PROOF AND POINTED OUT TWO COULD PLAY AT THIS GAME. NEITHER LEADER WAS SECURE AND QADHAFI HAD ENEMIES WHICH HE COULD RECRUIT
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AGAINST LIBYAN LEADER. HOWEVER, ALL THIS WAS POINTLESS AND HE HOPED THAT IN FUTURE NATIONAL ENERGIES COULD BE USED FOR MORE CONSTRUCTIVE PURPOSES.

13. KOUNTCHE THEN WENT ON TO MAKE POINT THAT THERE WAS NO PROSPECT OF STABILITY OR DEVELOPMENT IN NIGER AS LONG AS NORTHERN BORDERS WERE NOT SECURE AND RELATIONS WITH NORTHERN NEIGHBOR WERE NOT GOOD. IT WAS IN ALGERIAN AND LIBYAN INTEREST TO COOPERATE AS ALL THREE COUNTRIES NEEDED EACH OTHER. NIGER'S LOCATION AND INTEGRITY WERE OF STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE TO LEADING AFRICAN COUNTRIES LIKE ALGERIA AND LIBYA AND NIGER PROVIDED ALGERIA WITH CORRIDOR TO NIGERIA'S MARKETS. (KOUNTCHE SAID BOUMEDIENE SEEMED ATTRACTED BY THIS CONCEPT.) FINALLY POLITICAL PHILOSOPHIES WHICH ALGERIA AND LIBYA HAD ESPOUSED AND WERE TRYING TO EXPORT TO NIGER WERE ALIEN TO NIGER AND IF EITHER OR BOTH COUNTRIES THOUGHT THEY COULD IMPOSE THEIR RADICAL POLICIES ON NIGER THEY WOULD FIND NIGERIENS MOVING CLOSER TO NIGERIA. HAUSAS WHO ARE IN MAJORITY IN NIGER ARE FARMERS AND TRADERS OPPOSED TO SOCIALISM AND CONTROLLED ECONOMIES. IF NIGER ADOPTED ALGERIAN AND LIBYAN POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC INSTITUTIONS, HAUSAS WOULD SIMPLY TURN TO NIGERIA.

14. ON SUBJECT OF URANIUM, IF QADHAFI WANTED IT, HE WAS WELCOME TO IT ON SAME TERMS AS ANY OTHER OUTSIDE INVESTOR.

15. AS FOR WESTERN SAHARA ISSUE, QADHAFI HAD MADE CLEAR HE WAS OPPOSED TO RECOGNIZING SAHAROU REGIME BECAUSE IT DID NOT FIT INTO HIS CONCEPT OF ARAB REVOLUTION. TO KOUNTCHE'S SURPRISE, BOUMEDIENE DID NOT RAISE ISSUE BUT OBLIQUELY REFERRED TO NIGER'S RELATIONS WITH MAURITANIA AND TO HIS OLD FRIEND OULDJADDA AND HINTED AT DESIRE TO IMPROVE RELATIONS. COMMENT: BLAND REFERENCES IN FINAL COMMUNIQUE ON HIS ISSUE SEEM TO BEAR OUT KOUNTCHE'S VERSION.

16. AS FINAL POINT KOUNTCHE SAID THAT IN PREVIOUS SESSION WITH BOUMEDIENE LATTER SPOKE DISPARAGINGLY OF QADHAFI AND IN PUBLIC ORDERED HIM AROUND AND TREATED HIM AS SUB-ORDINATE. QADHAFI SEEMED LONELY AND NERVOUS AND ACTED AS THOUGH BOUMEDIENE WAS ONLY FRIEND HE HAD LEFT.
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17. COMMENT: FROM POINT OF VIEW OF NIGER, OUARGLA SUMMIT WAS ADROIT DISPLAY OF FIRMNESS TOWARD NEIGHBORS WHOM KOUNTCHE NORMALLY TREATS WITH HIGH DEGREE OF DEFERENCE AND CAUTION. PRESIDENT'S MORE GUTSY APPROACH MAY REFLECT BOTH A SELF-ASSURANCE GROWING OUT OF FAILURE OF MARCH 15 COUP ATTEMPT AND REALIZATION THAT POWERS LIKE LIBYA AND ALGERIA HAVE GROWING PROBLEMS OF THEIR OWN. HECK

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: NATIONAL SECURITY, FOREIGN RELATIONS, SUMMIT MEETINGS, MEETING PROCEEDINGS, INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 16 APR 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GolinoFR
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976NIAEMEY01653
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760151-0549
From: NIAEMEY
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760454/aaaabtjm.tel
Line Count: 306
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 6
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 NIAEMEY 1548, 76 NIAEMEY 1587
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GolinoFR
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 19 APR 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <19 APR 2004 by buchant0>; APPROVED <20 APR 2004 by GolinoFR>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: KOUNTCHI SUMMIT MEETING WITH BOUMEDIENE AND QUDHAFI
TAGS: PFOR, PINT, NG, AL, LY, (KOUNTCHE, SEYNI), (BOUMEDIENE, HOUARI), (QUADHAFI, MU'AMMAR)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006